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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000112

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S
PRETORIA FOR DATT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [LT](#)
SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT: RUMORS SWIRL ABOUT ASSAILAINTS'
AFFILIATION

REF: A. MASERU 109 B. MASERU 110 C. MASERU 25

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CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth C. Power, Deputy Chief of Mission.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (U) Following the April 22 assassination attempt on Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili (refs A & B), rumors have been swirling wildly about who might have been behind the attack. Among those mentioned as possible masterminds are the Lesotho Liberation Army, political opposition leader Tom Thabane, and current Minister of Natural Resources Monyane Moleleki. GOL sources are not indicating which direction their investigation is leading them, and post can only speculate about who may have been responsible.

Lesotho Liberation Army

¶2. (U) The Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) was formed in the mid-1970s as the armed wing of the Basotholand Congress Party (BCP), whose apparent victory in the 1970 election led the ruling Basotho National Party to suspend the constitution. The LLA launched armed attacks against the government for years, based in and supported by South Africa. When the BCP was democratically elected into power in 1993, the LLA was formally disbanded and none of its members were incorporated into the Lesotho Defense Force, although this was initially proposed. Some former LLA members were given jobs in government ministries and public enterprises. However, those who did not get jobs or other support from the government were left angry and disillusioned. This group of former LLA members has appealed to the current government for assistance several times, as the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) was formed when the BCP split in 1997 and is seen by the ex-LLA members as the logical successor to their original supporters. Despite meeting with the Prime Minister in 2006 to air their grievances and request financial assistance for income-generating projects, these ex-LLA members have not received any assistance from the government.

¶3. (U) In the aftermath of the June/July 2007 attacks on ministerial residences, there were rumors that former members of the LLA had fled to South Africa, and the police later indicated that former LLA members were considered suspects in the attacks. Although no LLA members were arrested in connection with these attacks, it was common knowledge that the group was still unhappy with the lack of government response to their requests for assistance. Following this week's assassination attempt, sources within the LDF indicated that it was possible that

"those responsible for the 2007 attacks" might be behind this attack, as well. Although the LLA was not named, the implication is that they would again be considered a suspect.

Political Opposition

¶4. (U) The All Basotho Convention (ABC) is the country's largest opposition party and currently, the only one with sufficient strength to be considered a viable opposition to the LCD. The party was formed in 2006 when its leader, Tom Thabane, left the LCD. The LCD and ABC have a difficult relationship, particularly since the 2007 elections, when the questions over the legitimacy of both parties' political alliances with other, smaller parties led to disputes over how many Parliament seats would be apportioned to each. This dispute led to a SADC mediation process, which has been stalled since October 2008, with no resolution in sight. In addition, the LCD has refused to formally recognize Thabane as the leader of the opposition, thereby denying him access to a salary and a government vehicle, which are perks of that designation. On April 17, Thabane was quoted in an interview with the Lesotho Times as saying, in relation to the SADC mediation process, "I am not in a position to say where we will be going from here~.My only advice for this government is for them to reopen the dialogue, bring in the experts that were expelled by them. That is possibly their last chance for a peaceful solution to this crisis." The GOL has referenced this comment indirectly in press statements about the assassination attempt.

Internal LCD conflict

¶5. (U) In January 2009, the LCD held internal elections and chose a new governing body for the party (ref C). In this election, Monyane Moleleki, currently Minister of Natural Resources, lost his bid to retain his position as

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Editor-in-Chief of the party paper, which he had held for over 10 years and is traditionally a position of power; meanwhile, Mothajoe Metsing, Minister of Communications, was elected Secretary General. Political analysts view Moleleki's star as falling, while Metsing's is rising. Moleleki and Metsing have both been targets of unsuccessful attacks on ministers, although there has been public speculation that Moleleki's attack was orchestrated by him as means to raise his political profile. Current rumors indicate that the attempt on the Prime Minister may have been a play by Moleleki to take power.

Comment

¶6. (C) The GOL has not revealed any information to indicate whom they think was behind the assassination attempt. The attack has taken the country by surprise; even looking back with the advantage of hindsight, there were no hints that such an act was about to take place. There have been the usual political squabbles between the governing LCD and the opposition parties, but nothing out of the ordinary since the 2007 national elections.

¶7. (C) Post believes that Moleleki is the least likely culprit in this assassination attempt. He is currently a minister, his wife holds a position with the local UN offices, and his sister-in-law is the minister of health; he would have much to lose by staging an abortive attack. His family is well-established here and in recent conversations with the Ambassador, he has stated that he is content and looking forward to the future with the LCD. He has displayed no public animosity towards either Metsing or Mosisili and appears to be a staunch supporter of the current government. Although Thabane did make comments referring to the 2007 attacks, he does not seem to be a likely candidate either. The ABC has strong ties

to the ANC and Jacob Zuma, and with party membership growing, the ABC's star seems to be on the rise (septel). Political pundits expect the ABC to have a strong showing in the 2010 local elections, and, if they can sustain their current momentum, in the 2012 national elections, too.

18. (C) The LLA has motive and a history of violent attacks within Lesotho, to include bombings, attacks on police stations, and possibly the 2007 attacks. The organization's history of maintaining a base within South Africa might also explain the presence of non-Basotho among the assailants (ref B). With no insight into the GOL's ongoing investigations of the assassination attempt, it is difficult to speculate about a culprit. However, given the above factors, post currently estimates that the LLA is most likely to be behind the attack.
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